

To: Kluesner, Dave[kluesner.dave@epa.gov]
From: Judith S. Weis
Sent: Wed 6/18/2014 3:49:18 PM
Subject: Re: Wall Street Journal: Bacteria Proposed for Passaic River Superfund Site Cleanup

The bacteria won't do anything for the mercury in there.

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> <http://online.wsj.com/articles/bacteria-proposed-for-passaic-river-superfund-site-cleanup-1403055233>
> Wall Street Journal
> Bacteria Proposed for Passaic River Superfund Site Cleanup
> Scientists Backed by Two of the Companies Liable for the Cleanup Want to
> Avoid Dredging
> By Heather Haddon
> June 18, 2014
> A decades long fight over cleaning up one of the nation's most
> contaminated riverbeds has posed a difficult question: how to safely
> remove enough toxic material from New Jersey's Passaic River to fill two
> MetLife Stadiums.
> The federal government is moving forward with long-stalled efforts to rid
> the Passaic of cancer-causing toxins lodged deep in the riverbed. The U.S.
> Environmental Protection Agency has proposed dredging 4.3 million cubic
> yards of sediment and transporting it out of New Jersey for incineration
> and disposal, at an estimated cost of \$1.7 billion.
> Now, scientists backed by two of the companies liable for the cleanup want
> to take the effort in a different direction, with a plan to test whether a
> form of bacteria could be deployed to neutralize some of the pollution.
> The group of bacteria, called Dehalococcoides, suck up the hydrogen gas in
> some carcinogenic chemicals and then leave behind less harmful material,
> advocates said.
> At a cost of several million dollars, the bacteria would be cultivated
> under appropriate conditions for about 18 months in the river's most
> polluted stretches, near Newark, and reviewed by two New Jersey
> universities, said John Pardue, a professor of civil and environmental
> engineering at Louisiana State University and the proposal's lead
> scientist.
> If the experiment showed success, the technique could be tried on other
> waterways as a cheaper and less environmentally taxing alternative to
> dredging, Mr. Pardue said. Dredging is costly and not all
> environmentalists support it, as it takes resources to transport the
> material and fills up landfills. "At this scale, developing game-changing
> technologies would be huge," said Mr. Pardue.
> Maxus Energy Corp. and Tierra Solutions Inc.-two energy companies
> responsible for the cleanup-will submit a formal plan to EPA by the end of
> June, officials said.
> "It's our money and our risk," said Michael Turner, a New Jersey
> representative for Maxus and Tierra. "If it adds to the body of knowledge
> and ultimate solution, what's not to like?"
> An EPA spokesman said the proposal will be considered when it is
> submitted.
> PHOTO A derelict boat sits in the Passaic at low tide. The U.S. government
> has proposed dredging 4.3 million cubic yards of sediment out of the
> river. Emile Wamsteker for The Wall Street Journal
> Efforts to clean up the Passaic have a complicated history. Some
> environmental groups and residents are skeptical of the bacteria plan.
> "The No. 1 fear is that alternative proposals are being made on the basis

> of cost, not the basis of cleanup," said Joseph Della Fave, executive
 > director of the Ironbound Community Corp., a Newark nonprofit.
 > The Passaic runs for roughly 80 miles through northern New Jersey,
 > beginning in suburban Morris County before progressing to more urban areas
 > on its journey to the Hackensack River and Newark Bay.
 > It was one of the first industrialized rivers in the country, and it is
 > coated with dioxins, PCBs and other harmful chemicals. The contamination
 > stretches 17 miles in Bergen and Essex counties-from Dundee Dam near
 > Garfield, N.J., to the Newark Bay-but the worst 8-mile section is
 > concentrated in Newark and Harrison.
 > In 1984, the EPA identified the former Diamond Alkali Co. plant along the
 > river in Newark as a Superfund site after it long produced Agent Orange
 > and other hazardous chemicals.
 > Superfund cleanups tend to be complex, and the Passaic River's is expected
 > to involve one of the largest ever removals of contaminated sediment. To
 > complicate matters, more than 100 different entities have inherited the
 > responsibility of paying for the river remediation, and they have fought
 > bitterly against it and among themselves.
 > "It's made the whole process more contentious and more difficult to
 > resolve," said former Gov. Jim Florio, a Democrat who was the prime
 > sponsor of the Superfund legislation when he served in Congress.
 > In April, the EPA released its long-anticipated plan to clean up the most
 > contaminated 8 miles of the river by dredging up more than 4 million cubic
 > yards of sediment. The riverbed would be capped, and the sediment would be
 > transported by rail to be burned or held.
 > The state, New Jersey federal representatives and many community groups
 > back the plan. It's now in a comment period through August. Once
 > finalized, federal authorities would negotiate with the responsible
 > parties to pay for it.
 > The EPA hopes to have a final plan by next year.
 > Maxus and Tierra have begun to remove tens of thousands of cubic yards of
 > the most contaminated sediment, but in recent weeks began advancing the
 > bacteria proposal.
 > Strains of the bacteria have shown remarkable success in removing certain
 > toxic chemicals in soil and groundwater contaminations in other Superfund
 > sites, but not in a riverbed on a wide scale, said Ruth Richardson, a
 > professor of civil and environmental engineering at Cornell University.
 > A spokesman for U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez (D, N.J.) said he wasn't aware of
 > the bacteria proposal but stood behind the EPA's plan. U.S. Rep. Bill
 > Pascrell, (D, N.J.) said he was open to testing the bacteria.
 > Deborah Mans, executive director of NY/NJ Baykeeper, a conservation
 > nonprofit, said she had seen far-flung proposals pushed by those on the
 > hook for the river's cleanup over the years, but supports researching
 > alternatives to dredging.
 > "It is heartbreaking that the best thing they can do is scoop out the
 > material and remove it," she said.
 > MAP: WATER WORK
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